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Tax Free Week Is Back! Plan For Your Back-To-School Shopping

All clothing and footwear costing less than \$300 will now be exempt during “Sales Tax Free Week” which will be from **Sunday August 15th through Saturday August 21st**. It’s a great way for families to save!

Property Tax Exemption Increased!

To alleviate burdens placed on state taxpayers, the property tax credit was increased from **\$300 to \$500** beginning in Fiscal Year 2005.

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64th District

ROBERTA WILLIS
STATE REPRESENTATIVE



Department of Agriculture Preserved “Keep It Growing”



One of the greatest accomplishments of the 2004 Session was maintaining our Department of Agriculture. This agency is instrumental in sustaining our food supply, preserving working farmland and stimulating Connecticut’s economy. Last year, the Agriculture agency was eliminated and merged with the Department of Consumer Protection. I fought to overturn this shortsighted decision and am pleased to report that the Department of Agriculture has been restored. We were also able to secure \$2 million for the preservation of farmland. Hopefully, we can do much more next session. Yes, we must **keep it growing!**

64TH DISTRICT

Cornwall
Goshen
Salisbury
Sharon
Torrington



STATE REPRESENTATIVE

ROBERTA WILLIS

Capitol News 2004

The Verdict is in: Torrington Lands Courthouse!

Litchfield County needs a new courthouse. After more than 30 years of a tug of war between the City of Torrington and the Town of Litchfield on where a new Litchfield County Courthouse should be built, the verdict is that its new home will be in Torrington. Torrington is better suited for a 160,000 sq ft building. Previously proposed sites along Route 202 in Litchfield faced neighborhood and community opposition, and there were environmental concerns. Placing the courthouse in the county’s largest city and regional center makes more sense and is a major step toward Torrington’s downtown redevelopment plan. The new Torrington courthouse will prove to be a tremendous boost to the city’s

economy. I am anxious for the construction to begin. The Department of Public Works will begin advertising for sites in September and it is hoped that one will be selected by March 2005. Torrington is definitely a “City On the Move,” and I anticipate many more exciting projects to come.



Rep. Willis speaking on the steps of the current Litchfield Courthouse at a press conference announcing the decision to build a new courthouse in Torrington.

A Fair and Balanced Budget

The state has finally emerged from a deficit and fiscal year 2004 brought a surplus of over **\$200 million**. The 2005 budget that just passed is a **budget trifecta, meaning that it is balanced, under the state spending cap, and does not impose new taxes on our citizens**. It is fiscally responsible while addressing the critical needs important to the people of Connecticut. We have restored needed funds for education; additional funding has been allocated for our cities and towns for road and other improvements; and we have improved the quality of health care in our state. With Connecticut slowly recovering from past economic hardships, we were able to fund programs and services previously cut due to our state’s billion dollar deficit.

Preserving the Environment

Clean Cars, Cleaner Air

A leading contributor to asthma attacks is exposure to air pollution from cars. Tailpipe emissions are the single largest source of air pollution in Connecticut

To significantly improve our air quality and the health of citizens, Connecticut has adopted California's stringent emission standards with the passage of the **"Clean Cars Bill."** Toxic emissions from cars, SUVs and light trucks will be reduced beginning with model year 2008. The bi-partisan support for this vital legislation is a tribute to the legislature's commitment to making Connecticut a better place to live and raise a family. (PA 04-84, Effective October 1, 2004)



Global Climate Change

Carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases released by fossil fuel consumption, deforestation, and other human activities can trap heat in our atmosphere for 100 years with devastating environmental consequences.

I introduced legislation that addresses greenhouse gas emissions and global warming. We have set stricter greenhouse gas emissions and reduction goals and the Department of Environmental Protection will establish a regional greenhouse gas registry and reporting system. **This will reduce greenhouse gas pollution while stimulating the development and use of energy-efficient technologies and renewable energy.** (PA 04-252, Effective October 1, 2004)

Wetlands Protection

Between 20 and 50 percent of existing wetlands are at risk. Wetlands protect our drinking water and wildlife.

Wetlands act as natural water filters, absorbing pollutants, pesticides, and other contaminants before they pollute our lakes, rivers, coastal waters, and ultimately, our drinking water. **The state has taken steps to protect our wetlands and ensure the survival of wildlife habitats.** A new law allows the state to take into account aquatic, plant or animal life and habitats in wetlands and watercourses when deciding whether a project that potentially affects wetlands can proceed. (PA 04-209, Effective Upon Passage)



Providing Quality Health Care

Protecting the Health of Our State's Most Vulnerable Citizens

The 2005 budget restores cuts in health care that will help ensure children and families receive quality health coverage.

One of the most important initiatives I set out to accomplish this past legislative session was to protect health care for those who need it most. I co-sponsored legislation that eliminated co-payments and premiums on the **Healthcare For Uninsured Kids and Youth (HUSKY) program.** HUSKY provides insurance for low-income children. The budget also restores funding that extends HUSKY coverage for adults. In addition, **co-payments on prescriptions and doctor visits for Medicaid beneficiaries were removed.** (PA 04-216, Effective July 1, 2004)



Hospice in Rural Areas

Hospice offers a comprehensive program of care to patients and families facing a life threatening illness.

Until now, home healthcare agencies in the small towns of the Northwest Corner were unable to be reimbursed under Medicare for hospice services, since they do not meet state staffing requirements made to fit larger communities. I co-sponsored legislation that grants these agencies **a staffing waiver to ensure that terminally ill patients and families receive hospice services.** This allows our local hospice program to continue to provide its high quality of care. (PA 04-81, Effective Upon Passage)

Expanding Health Insurance

Health Savings Accounts will help ensure more affordable health insurance options.

Health Savings Accounts (HSA's) are available in Connecticut. HSA's are tax-exempt personal savings accounts in which employees can save money for future medical expenses not covered by insurance. HSA's are funded by employee contributions through pre-tax payroll deductions or employer contributions. The savings of these funds can be used for eyeglass purchases or other items not covered by primary health insurance. (PA 04-174, Effective Upon Passage)



Questions ~ Concerns? Call State Representative Roberta Willis at 1-800-842-8267.